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FM AMEMBASSY RIYADH
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8908
INFO RUEHXP/ALL NATO POST COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUCNISL/ISLAMIC COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW IMMEDIATE 0699
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE 0778
RUEHPS/AMEMBASSY PRISTINA IMMEDIATE 0014
RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH IMMEDIATE 9659
RUEHRH/CHUSMTM RIYADH SA IMMEDIATE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RHMFISI/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO IMMEDIATE 0088
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE IMMEDIATE
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE
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S E C R E T RIYADH 001190

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT PASS TO NEA SJONES, NEA/RA MADLER, EUR/ACE/SEED
JBORIS AND NEA/ARP WROEBUCK

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/03/2018

TAGS: EU EUN FR GR KPKO PGOV PREL RS SA UNC KV VI

SUBJECT: SAUDIS SLOWLY MOVING TOWARD KOSOVO RECOGNITION

REF: A. MCGRATH-URETA JULY 29 E-MAIL

1B. RIYADH 1170

1C. RIYADH 678

1D. RIYADH 586

Classified By: Charge' d'Affaires Michael Gfoeller
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (S) SUMMARY. According to the no. 3 official in the Saudi Foreign Ministry, the Saudi Arabian Government (SAG) is slowly moving toward official SAG recognition of Kosovo. He ascribed the SAG's reluctance to recognize the newly independent Balkan republic heretofore to concern over Russian sensitivities, as well as a desire to refrain from creating the impression that Kosovo is an "Islamic issue" for the Saudis. The growing number of European states that have recognized Kosovo apparently have allayed Saudi concerns.
END SUMMARY.

12. (S) Per ref A, Riyadh Charge' d'Affaires and Political Counselor met with Saudi MFA Chief of Americas Department and no. 3 in MFA hierarchy Ambassador Khalid Jindan on July 30 regarding Kosovo. Jindan was aware of the Kosovar request to meet with Saudi FM Prince Saud al-Faisal, referring to a joint French/British/Italian/German demarche on the same topic made to him on July 28. Jindan stated a Kosovar-Saudi meeting would likely occur, either in late August once Prince Saud returns to the Kingdom (he is currently traveling in Morocco and France) or in September at UNGA.

13. (S) Jindan agreed on the importance that Kosovo's final outcome be a peaceful one with multilateral support, adding he saw it now "becoming a priority" and "momentum was building" for its recognition. He opined that "Serbia was changing" and that if it eased its opposition to Kosovo it would help its chances of eventual accession to the EU. As we encouraged Saudi Arabia to recognize Kosovo, Jindan repeated the SAG's position of not wanting to make Kosovo a "Muslim issue," with Kosovar independence being perceived as an Islamic cause celebre'. The SAG prefers that it be a European issue without any Muslim connotations, he said. Jindan acknowledged there was also Russian pressure across

the international spectrum to not recognize Kosovo, but he concluded that the "time of Saudi Arabia recognizing Kosovo is nearing."

¶4. (S) In a separate meeting between Pol Counselor and French DCM in Riyadh Emmanuel Bonne on August 2, Bonne confirmed he received the same response from the SAG when they delivered the joint demarche to the Saudis. He added these types of demarches normally include Spain and Greece, but these two nations had opted to not participate in the Kosovo demarche.

¶5. (S) COMMENT. Kosovo is not a strategic concern for the Saudis, as they are focused on Arab and regional security issues - Syrian and Hezbollah activity in Lebanon; Israeli-Palestinian conflict; Al-Qaeda terrorism in the Kingdom; Iranian expansionism; Iraq's insurgency; Yemeni stability; and Pakistani instability. Likewise, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud is highly concerned with Islam's global image, as shown by his initiating an interfaith dialogue (Reftel B). Hence his decision to disavow any link to the Kingdom's and Islamic religious agenda to Kosovo, which he likely considers a secular national entity and solely a European issue. Additionally, Saudi Arabia has a large weapons deal pending with Russia. The Saudis view this arms sale as more than just obtaining military hardware. It will also give them leverage with Moscow vis a vis with Iran, they hope. We believe Jindan's statement that Saudi recognition of Kosovo is much closer and may take place this Summer or Fall. END COMMENT.

GFOELLER